

THE SILENT PEOPLE

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

BEING THE SEVENTH OF THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF
MR. STANLEY BROOKE, THE DELIBERATE DETECTIVE

ON the first Sunday in May there occurred in the heart of London a tragedy simple enough in itself, yet with a strange and sinister meaning for those who cared to study life a little way beneath its exterior crust.

Among the well-dressed crowd of London's fashionable people swarming in Hyde Park between midday and one o'clock on Sunday a woman, whose rags were only partially concealed by a rusty black shawl, was seen suddenly to reel and fall.

She was picked up dead. Upon the bosom of her threadbare gown were pinned a few words of writing, which afforded to the smug press of the country an opportunity for many rhetorical flourishes. They led, too, to other and more serious things, for there were those who accepted them as a message.

These were the words, written very correctly in faint but straggling characters upon a half sheet of coarse white paper:

I am thirty years old. I am going to die. I am tired out. There is no hope in this world for the poor. I have done my best. I have a husband and four children. My husband earns twenty-one shillings a week. I cannot feed him, myself, and four children on twenty-one shillings a week. I have tried.

My children are thin and hungry. My husband never smiles. He, too, is losing his strength. I myself am the withered remnant of a woman. I have no hope. I know that there is a life, but, for some reason, I am not asked to share in it.

This morning, for once, I go to see the sunshine. I go to see the other women. Perhaps I shall understand what it is they have done to deserve life and I have not done. And then I shall rest.

When the newspapers had finished with

their stories, and a satisfactory fund had been raised for the children of the dead woman, things began to happen.

A millionaire employer of labor, who had closed his yards and turned seventeen hundred people into the streets because one of the commodities used by him had reached a price which he declared made his business unprofitable, was shot dead as he crossed the pavement from his house in Park Lane to step into his motor-car. His murderer turned out to be one of his unemployed workpeople whose wife had gone on the streets to find bread for her starving children. The man defended himself from the dock with a rough eloquence which paralyzed even the law.

Within a few days other events happened which pointed to some systematic effort. Four factories in different parts of the country, whose owners were deservedly unpopular, were destroyed either by dynamite or fire. A trades-union official, who was reported to have accepted a bribe from a federation of employers to prohibit a strike, even though he was in possession of large funds subscribed by the workpeople, was missed for several days and discovered with a cord around his neck in the Thames.

Then a leading daily paper published a mysterious document which had been dropped into its letter-box by an unknown hand. It was headed:

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND!

There are millions who have been waiting for a sign. Eleven days ago a woman died in Hyde Park, and the message found pinned to the rags which covered her withered body has been accepted as that sign. England is governed by laws—laws ill-made by man for his kind. The old laws are hard to break; the new laws are difficult to frame. From our place in the wilderness we who send this message have spent many weary hours pondering over the great subject—how and in what fashion shall we make heard the voice of the sufferers?

A short time ago hundreds of women, nourished in comfortable homes, educated, civilized, apparently respectable, called attention to a grievance from which they imagined themselves to be suffering by great and wanton destruction of property. Their grievance is to ours as the light of a candle to the burning of the sun. There are those who have approved their methods. They have taught us a lesson. Cause and effect shall be dissociated in our minds. Until you listen to us we will kill, burn, and destroy. When the moment has come we will point to you the way to freedom.

To-morrow the king drives through the city to the Mansion House. The king to-morrow will be safe. But between Ludgate Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral one of the horses drawing his coach will be destroyed.

THE SILENT PEOPLE.

This document was scoffed at by nearly every one who read it. Even the editor of the paper was derided for publishing an anonymous hoax. That morning, however, half-way up Ludgate Hill, a spectator was seen to break through the little line and, taking a deliberate aim, to shoot one of the horses of the king's coach through the head.

He was at once arrested—in fact, he made no effort to escape. He made no reply to the charge and remained absolutely dumb, both at the time and subsequently. He was committed to prison during the king's pleasure, a fate to which he submitted with the utmost indifference.

On the following day the letter-box of the *Daily Observer* was watched by the cleverest detectives in London. The sub-editor, however, discovered in the morning another communication among the rest of his correspondence. This document was headed in the same way:

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND!

We have a thousand men like William Clarke ready to do our bidding; ready to kill, burn, or destroy, as we choose. We are tired of our labor members and our magazine-writing socialists. The people speak now for themselves. We adopt the tactics of a more educated class.

On Thursday one of the masterpieces in the National Gallery will be destroyed.

THE SILENT PEOPLE.

This time, short of closing the National Gallery, every possible precaution was taken, but about three o'clock in the afternoon the Madonna of Giotto was discovered cut into strips.

The perpetrator of the deed was easily arrested. His name was Johnson. He was a weaver by trade, out of work, and poorly dressed.

He made no reply to the charge, no reply in the police court, and, refusing to answer the simplest questions, he was committed to prison indefinitely.

On the third day another communication was received and published in the *Observer*:

We of the people have been accused always of ranting, of shouting our wrongs from the house-

tops. Let us hope that our new tactics will be approved. We have left off words. We have come to deeds, and those who do our bidding have learned silence. To-morrow there will be wrecked the house of one whose name is held by us as the name of an enemy.

THE SILENT PEOPLE.

Throughout London a certain thrill of anticipation seemed to quiver in the air from hour to hour. Who was there who could be called an enemy of the people? In great black head-lines the evening papers told the story.

In a suburb of London the house of a member of the government who had risen from the ranks, and to whom such measures for the relief of the poor which a temporizing government had devised had lately been entrusted, was completely wrecked.

The man himself had escaped, but his house was in ruins. He stood branded as an enemy of the people. On this occasion the thrower of the bomb remained undiscovered. The house was one of those which had been left unwatched.

II

It was about this time that Stanley Brooke made a thrilling and amazing discovery, which at first threatened seriously to alter his relations with his partner. He arrived home unexpectedly early one night to find a note asking him to call in and report. He discovered the door of her flat unfastened and the door of the inner room wide open. Hearing his footsteps, she called out:

"Please come here at once."

After a moment's hesitation he obeyed. He advanced even to the threshold of the inner room and, for the first time, saw inside. He stood quite still, transfixed with surprise.

Every detail of her sitting-room was always rigidly reminiscent of Constance herself. Even the easy chairs were a little severe, and the furniture which she had added from time to time was of a somber and decorous type. Her color-scheme was gray; the pictures which hung upon the walls were nearly all landscapes; her whole environment always seemed so thoroughly in keeping with her clothes, her manner of speech itself of prim, almost Quakerish simplicity.

He had pictured her own room as something like this: a simple bedstead, a few prints, an apartment clean and bare and

chaste. He looked instead into a chamber utterly unlike anything he could have imagined.

The walls were colored a faint rose-pink, and there was a carpet on the floor of almost the same hue. The bedstead was of white, with a top of hooded muslin tied up with ribbons. There was an easy chair and a large divan, chints-covered, luxurious; a dressing-table covered with dainty trifles; and on the bed, by the side of an empty basket, a little heap of garments which seemed to him like a sea of lace and muslin, with blue ribbons stealing from unexpected places.

Everything was spotless, exquisitely dainty. It might well have been the sleeping apartment of a princess.

Brooke stood rooted to the spot. His final shock of amazement came when he realized that Constance herself was wearing a dressing-gown of white muslin, that she seemed like a bewildering vision of fluffiness and laces and ribbons. He was absolutely incapable of any form of speech. He simply stood and stared while her face grew darker.

"How dare you?" she exclaimed, advancing rapidly toward the door.

"You called me," he declared. "I got your note and hurried down. When I came inside you called me."

"I thought it was Susan, you idiot!" she retorted, slamming the door in his face.

He walked slowly away. The maid whom Constance had recently engaged for several hours a day entered hurriedly, almost at the same moment, from the outside door. She smiled at Brooke as she passed.

"I am afraid that Miss Robinson will think I have been gone a long time, sir," she remarked. "I could not find the shop."

She disappeared, closing the door behind her. Brooke threw himself into an easy chair. So there was another Constance, after all, a Constance who loved the things a woman should love, a Constance who was as dainty and sweet as anything he could have conceived in his most sentimental moments.

He felt his heart beating with the pleasure of it. Her life, then, was to some extent a pose. At heart she was like other girls. He sat with half-closed eyes, dwelling upon those few seconds—seconds full of exquisite imaginings.

It seemed to him that he had never in his life looked upon anything more beautiful than that little chamber and its contents. Even Constance, when she at last appeared, could not dispel his dreams. She was dressed in severe and homely black, unrelieved even at the neck. A vision he seemed to have had of silk stockings was dissipated by the sight of her square-toed shoes. She came toward him in an absolutely matter-of-fact way. He rose, a little embarrassed.

"If I was rude just now," she said calmly, "I am sorry. The fault, I suppose, was mine."

"I certainly," he explained, "would not have dreamed of—"

"That will do," she interrupted. "We will not discuss the subject again, ever. I hope you will humor me so far as to forget the occurrence. I sent for you because I wanted to talk."

He nodded.

"It is three weeks since we did anything."

"I have nothing definite to propose now," she went on. "I wanted to speak about the Silent People."

"There is a reward of a thousand pounds offered this morning," he remarked.

"They are doing all they can to break the thing up," she said. "People are growing uneasy. The question is whether, supposing we were successful where others have failed, we could take that thousand pounds' reward with a clear conscience."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that I am not at all sure," she continued, "that my sympathies are not with the Silent People."

Brooke, whose habits of mind were conventional, even though his views were broad enough, shook his head.

"One may see weak points in our laws, in our whole social system," he observed, "but the attacks made upon it must be legitimate. I say that it is the duty of every one to uphold the law."

"Yours," she replied, "is the point of view of the man in the street. I will not tell you exactly what I think. Only this—if you join with me in a certain scheme which I am about to propose, it must be on this one condition only: that in the event of success, the claiming of that reward—that is to say, the denouncing of these people—must rest with me."

"I do not mind that," he assented.

"You understand," she repeated. "Even if we are successful—supposing we find out who it is that writes those notices and who has planned these outrages—if I decide that the knowledge is to be forgotten, it must be so."

"I agree," he said. "I think that your instinct will be too strong for your humanitarianism."

"We shall see," she rejoined. "There are a good many threads hanging loose, a good many which have been tried already and thrown on one side. Now tell me, you have done what I asked you this afternoon?"

He nodded.

"I was at the House of Commons at four o'clock. I heard Cammerley bring in his bill."

"What did you think of him?"

Brooke hesitated.

"At first," he said thoughtfully, "I was disappointed. Then he began to impress me. His is rather a curious personality. Nothing about him suggests in any way a leader of the people. He has a thin frame, he stoops, and he wears gold-rimmed spectacles. He spoke almost without gestures and his voice at times was quite low. It was not until he had been speaking for some time that one realized that he was, after all, in his way an orator."

"He had no notes, he spoke with perfect assurance, and he said some startling things. But he didn't attempt to make the points that these labor men nearly always do. There wasn't a touch of rhetoric in anything he said. He simply spoke of the coming of the people as though it were written."

"He believes that," she murmured.

"On the whole," Brooke concluded, "I should put him down as a dangerous man."

"Why dangerous?"

"He is a revolutionary. One could almost imagine him a Robespierre."

"Even that," she remarked, "may come."

"And now," he asked, "tell me exactly why you wanted me to hear him. You had some reason."

"I had," she admitted. "I think that if you could see inside his brain you wouldn't have much trouble in earning that thousand pounds."

"He is one of the Silent People!" Brooke exclaimed.

Constance waited for a moment.

"You know," she said then, "that I am a member of the Forward Club?"

"You told me so the other night," he replied. "I remember how surprised I was."

"There is nothing for you to be surprised at," she continued calmly. "Anyhow, I was there the other afternoon. Cammerley was having tea with a woman at the next table. They were talking together earnestly. You know how acute my hearing is. I caught a single sentence. It was enough."

Brooke was obviously interested.

"If Cammerley is really mixed up with those people," he said, "it would cause a sensation if it were known. He has been getting quite a little following of his own lately. The other side have rather taken him up. The *Daily Mail* had a leading article on him one day last week."

"Why not? He is a strong man. In a few years' time, unless accidents happen, the country will have to reckon with him."

"Accidents?"

"I mean if he does not come to grief," she explained. "It is his pose at present to be a moderate man. They say that at heart he is a red-hot anarchist, ready to sacrifice the country, the lives of millions, if necessary, to his principles. That is why I wonder whether we should not be doing good rather than harm if we were to take that thousand pounds' reward."

"You would have to get your proofs first," he reminded her.

"We might fail," she admitted. "On the other hand, we might succeed. What I cannot make up my mind about is whether we might not do more harm by succeeding."

"But you are not a socialist yourself!"

"I am not so sure about that," she answered.

He shrugged his shoulders. It was certainly not the place or the time for arguments.

"In any case," he begged, "tell me just what you have in your mind."

"You are still in touch with the *Daily Observer* people," she said. "Well, go and interview Mr. Cammerley on their behalf. Talk to him in his own house. See if anything occurs to you."

"No hints?"

"None. I am not keeping anything from you. I simply heard a sentence pass

between him and a woman whom I know very well by repute. Go and see what you think of him."

Brooke glanced at the clock.

"I'll go to-morrow," he promised; "but in the mean time—"

"I am going to dine at my club to-night," she interrupted, a little ruthlessly. "I shall be leaving in a few minutes."

"You wouldn't like to take me with you, I suppose?" he suggested.

"I should dislike it very much indeed," she replied. "I don't see the slightest reason why I should pay for your dinner."

"It's only eighteenpence," he ventured hopefully.

"The amount is not so serious, perhaps," she admitted. "It is the principle. Besides, I want to make a few inquiries there about Mr. Cammerley's friends. I shall be better alone."

"Constance," he began, suddenly inspired by a recollection of that little room.

Her eyes flashed a warning.

"I consider the use of my Christian name a liberty, Mr. Brooke!"

He turned on his heel and went out. It was not until he had left the room that her lips relaxed in the least. Then she smiled.

III

BROOKE presented himself at two o'clock the next day at a large and gloomy-looking house in Bermondsey, a house which had once belonged to a manufacturer of leather who had chosen to live near his works, but which stood now in almost pitiful isolation, with a tan-yard at the back of it and a row of small shops on either side.

A woman admitted him, a woman who was neatly dressed but who wore no cap and had not the manners of a servant. He passed along a bare hall and was shown into a large, untidy-looking study.

Mr. Cammerley looked up from his desk as Brooke approached, but did not offer his hand or attempt any form of conventional greeting. He pointed, however, to a plain deal chair close at hand.

"I do not understand," he said, "why you have come to see me. Your card says that you are a journalist. One paper has already turned me inside out and indulged in a photographic representation of the person I am not, and given a faithful description of the things I did not say and

the views which I do not hold. Surely one is enough?"

"These are curious days," Brooke remarked, setting his hat upon the table. "The whole reading public is crazy for personalities."

The man behind the desk looked at him steadfastly. It seemed to Brooke that those light-colored eyes were growing larger behind his spectacles.

"What is the name of your paper?" he asked.

"I am a reporter on the *Daily Observer*," Brooke told him.

"You are also a liar," Mr. Cammerley said calmly. "Your name is Brooke, and, with a certain young lady as your partner, you have been teaching Scotland Yard its business for the last few months. Now, sir, what the devil do you mean by coming to see me under false pretenses? Is there any mystery connected with me or my life? Is there anything you wish to discover?"

Brooke shut up his note-book. He had the curious sense of being in the presence of a man who could read his innermost thoughts.

"To tell you the truth," he confessed, "I was wondering whether you could not give me some information with regard to the Silent People?"

Mr. Cammerley continued to look steadily at him.

"Supposing I could," he asked, "why should I? You are a stranger to me. There is a thousand pounds' reward, I believe, offered for information about these people. Why should you associate me with them in any way?"

"You are a socialist," Brooke reminded him. "You speak with wonderful restraint, but that very restraint is impressive. I heard you yesterday afternoon in the House of Commons. I may be wrong, but to me you seemed to represent the type of man who would go to any lengths if he considered himself justified by his principles."

"For an inquiry agent," Mr. Cammerley declared, "you certainly do seem to be possessed of a certain amount of perception as regards elementary facts. How much of this interview is going in your paper, Mr. Brooke?"

"Not a word," Brooke replied.

"So I imagined," Mr. Cammerley remarked dryly. "Then listen. You are

right. I am an anarchist, if you like to use the word. That is to say, I would, if I had the power, rend this country from north to south that the better days might dawn. I would do evil that good may come."

"It is a dangerous doctrine."

Mr. Cammerley raised his eyebrows.

"A surgeon cuts off your leg that he may save your life."

"He obeys fixed laws," Brooke retorted, "and disease is a matter of fact, not principle."

Mr. Cammerley smiled indulgently. He glanced at the papers before him.

"Mr. Brooke," he said, "you are wasting my time. I have no desire to make a convert of you."

"Tell me something about the Silent People," Brooke persisted, "and I will go."

Cammerley rose slowly from his place and moved to the door. He held it open and turned his face toward the stairs.

"Lucy!" he called.

An answer came from above. Cammerley remained with the door open. In a few moments a woman appeared, a woman broadly built, with a dark, square face, a slight down upon the upper lip, and beautiful eyes—the eyes of an enthusiast. Her hair was parted simply in the middle. It was black and shiny, and there were large quantities of it. Her dress was plain in the extreme. She looked from Cammerley to Brooke.

"It is a young man," Cammerley explained softly, "who has come here in the guise of a reporter to know if I can tell him anything about the Silent People."

Not a muscle of her face changed, only a sudden light shone in her eyes. Brooke, who was glancing at her, shivered. For some mysterious reason he felt that he was in danger.

"This visitor of ours," Cammerley continued, looking at Brooke dispassionately, "has been associated with a young lady in various investigations during the last few months. He would call himself, I suppose, a private-inquiry agent, or something of the sort. He has become interested in the craze of the moment. He is exceedingly curious about the Silent People."

The woman sighed. When she spoke it was with a slight foreign accent.

"What is it that one hears about them?" she murmured. "There have been others

who have sought to discover their identity—others who are themselves silent now forever."

"The young man," Cammerley said thoughtfully, "is of a harmless type."

Brooke, as he stood there, was conscious of soft footsteps in the hall—footsteps which seemed to gather volume all the time, not the footsteps of one or two people, but the footsteps of dozens.

"You were looking for adventures, perhaps, my young friend," Cammerley continued. "You have been successful. Some one who visited me once remarked that this might well be a house of mysteries, so strangely situated in such a neighborhood. Perhaps it is. Look!"

He pushed the door a little further open. The hall seemed filled with men—men who were waiting patiently, men who exchanged not a syllable, pale-faced most of them, dressed in the garb of operatives, with something curious about them which, although he did not understand it, made Brooke shiver. Cammerley closed the door again.

"As I think you already knew before you came," he said quietly, "you are in the presence of the Silent People—Lucy Fragade and I myself. Those outside have also learned the gift of silence. They are some of those who do our bidding."

Brooke stared at the woman. The name was well enough known to him—Lucy Fragade, who had been expelled from Russia, imprisoned in America, imprisoned again in Germany, and forced to escape from France; the daughter of an anarchist, a woman who preached force and bloodshed with an eloquence which no man of her cause had ever approached. He recognized her from her portraits. She was gazing at him fixedly. She was more like them now than ever.

"There is a room at the back of this house," Cammerley continued, "into which others have been invited who have come as you have come, and the world has seen no more of them. The river flows within forty yards of my back door, and the tanyard is empty at night. I am afraid, Mr. Brooke, that the public will have to wait a little time for that interview with me which you proposed writing."

Brooke looked from one to the other. Up to the present moment, at any rate, he had felt no fear. Yet there was something a little disquieting in the expression with

which they regarded him; something ominous, too, in that sense of men waiting without. He remembered several disappearances lately. He knew suddenly that murder had been done in this place. Yet he was still without fear. Perhaps he was, to some extent, a fatalist. Death seemed to him always a thing so unlikely.

"I shall be missed," he remarked affably. "Miss Robinson knows that I have come to see you."

Cammerley nodded.

"The young lady who overheard our conversation at the Forward Club," he explained to Lucy. "It is a pity that she did not accompany you, sir."

"Perhaps," Brooke replied, "she is better where she is!"

The telephone-bell rang. Cammerley held the receiver to his ear.

"This is Mr. Cammerley speaking," he declared. "What can I do for you? Yes, Mr. Brooke is here. You are Miss Constance Robinson."

Brooke made a movement toward the telephone, but stopped.

"No, I am afraid that I cannot say," Cammerley continued, "what time Mr. Brooke will return. He will leave this room in a few minutes. As for the rest, it is difficult. Yes, I understand."

He listened for some time. His face showed no change of expression. He glanced toward the clock.

"Very well," he said, "the course you suggest will be quite agreeable to me. It would give me great pleasure to meet you personally. Yes, pray, come. As you say, it is only an affair of ten minutes in a taxicab."

Brooke sprang toward the telephone.

"She shall not come here!" he shouted.

Mr. Cammerley handed him the receiver.

"Really," he said, "you people are wasting a lot of our time this afternoon. Tell her yourself to keep away, then."

Brooke snatched the receiver.

"Miss Robinson!" he called out. "Constance, are you there? Constance!"

"Miss Robinson is here," was the calm reply.

"You are not to come to this man's house!" Brooke exclaimed. "If you do, don't come alone! You understand?"

"Quite well. There is probably a slight misunderstanding. *Au revoir!*"

"Listen!" Brooke begged.

The connection was gone. Cammerley

removed the instrument out of reach with a little sigh.

"My dear Mr. Brooke," he said, "the young lady is evidently accustomed to having her own way. Who can blame her? Miss Fragade is a little like that, too. Now how shall we spend the time until Miss Robinson arrives? Would you like to see around the place? Would you care to stroll through the tan-yard down to the river? There is a room here which Lucy calls our chamber of horrors. Perhaps you would like to see that? Or would you like to make the acquaintance of our bodyguard—fifty strange-looking men? Most of them now, I suppose, have gone back to their posts, but there will be a few remaining."

He swung open the door. There were a dozen men still in the hall, standing against the wall almost like statues. Their eyes were fixed upon Cammerley. They seemed ready to obey his slightest gesture. Brooke glanced at the door; Cammerley smiled.

"The only modern thing about the place," he remarked. "A double lock of really wonderful pattern. Would you like to see some of my books? Or would it amuse you to hear Lucy talk of her Continental experiences?"

The telephone-bell rang again. Cammerley spoke, apparently, to a whip in the House of Commons.

"I shall be in my place at four o'clock," Brooke heard him say. "The division, I suppose, is not likely to come on before dinner-time? Thank you!"

"An interesting thing, the telephone," he continued, replacing the receiver and turning to Brooke. "It seems to bring one so into touch with the outside world from the most impossible places, doesn't it? Ah, the taxicab! Stay here, please, Mr. Brooke. Miss Robinson will be properly received, without a doubt."

Constance was ushered into the room, a moment later, by the gray-haired woman who had admitted Brooke. She was, as usual, exceedingly quiet in her manner and very self-composed.

"It is Mr. Cammerley, is it not?" she inquired, holding out her hand. "And I am sure that this is Lucy Fragade? It is very interesting to meet you both."

Cammerley smiled.

"Without flattery," he remarked, "I may say that there have been many who have found it interesting."

Constance was standing between Lucy Fragade and Cammerley. She seemed very small.

"I have come," she announced, "to take Mr. Brooke back with me."

Lucy Fragade looked at her curiously. Cammerley smiled.

"Mr. Brooke was a little lonely," he said. "I have no doubt that he will find your coming of benefit to him."

"Ours must be only a flying visit," Constance continued quietly. "Before I go, there is a question I have wanted to ask Mr. Cammerley ever since I knew of his existence. This will probably be my only chance. Should I be too exacting if I begged for—say, thirty seconds in which to ask it?"

"I have no secrets," Cammerley replied. "Pray ask your question."

Constance looked at him intently.

"It was a question," she murmured, "which occurred to me first when I heard that Blanche Fragade was indeed—"

"Lucy Fragade," the woman interrupted.

Constance accepted the correction, but she did not at once continue. She was looking steadfastly at Cammerley. There was perhaps no one else in the room who noticed any change in him. Yet Brooke, who was nearest, and who found the temperature of the apartment on the cold side, was suddenly surprised to see two little drops of perspiration standing out on the man's forehead.

Cammerley looked toward the woman and said something to her in a tongue which neither Brooke nor Constance understood. She nodded and left the room. Cammerley leaned a little toward Constance as she passed out.

"Go on," he said.

"Is there any need?" she asked calmly. "I have a friend in Cyril Mansions. The letter is ready for the post—if we do not return."

Cammerley's face was, for a moment, like the face of a skeleton. His eyes shone large behind his spectacles. His lips had parted, showing his strong, yellow teeth.

"Your terms?" he whispered.

"This is not our affair," Constance said softly. "I was wrong to send him here," she added, motioning toward Brooke. "I, too, am of the people. So long as it is not life you take, he and I are silent."

Cammerley asked for no pledge. He understood. For a moment he listened.

Then he led the way toward the door. In the hall several shadowy figures came stealing toward them. He waved them back and opened the front door.

"You will find a taxicab at the corner," he said.

At the corner of the street they stopped to look around them. Brooke glanced back at the house they had left. Behind it was the tan-yard, and a little farther away they could see the masts in the river.

"A queer place," Constance observed composedly. "They say that he is a real philanthropist. His house is filled with all sorts of outcasts from the streets, to whom he gives temporary shelter. That is the reason he lives there."

"Is it?" Brooke replied dryly. "There is nothing would please me better than to go over it with half a dozen policemen at my back."

She shook her head.

"It is forbidden. I think those two people, mistaken though they may be,

represent things with which we do better not to interfere."

"At least," Brooke asked, "I may inquire who Blanche is?"

"But for Blanche," Constance told him, "I should never have suffered you to go to that man's house, because I know that they are suspicious of you and of me. Blanche is Lucy Fragade's sister. She left her home mysteriously some years ago. Lucy does not know where she is. Philip Cammerley does. There are only two things in life greater than that woman's devotion to her cause. One was her love for her sister; the other her passion for Cammerley. I should say that he was a man who feared but one thing in the world. When I spoke he saw the possibility of it."

Brooke handed her into a taxicab.

"There seems to be a weak spot in the life of every strong man," he remarked, "and that weak spot is always a woman. Even with myself—"

"Don't talk nonsense!" she interrupted.